



Volunteer Park Conservatory Business Plan Meeting Highlights and Next Steps

22 March, 2012

There were common themes among the small group responses and the written responses to the five questions that were asked at the public meeting on March 7. Overall, there was support for preservation of both the Conservatory building and the plant collection. The Conservatory is unique and the exterior is an important part of the Park and the plant collection is educational and provides a calming experience. At 100 years old, there is an established legacy in the City.

Suggestions for earning revenue ranged from an entry fee to more events to developing a “conservancy” (run by a non-profit) to partnering with Seattle Asian Art Museum and related institutions to corporate sponsorships. One suggestion was to change the revenue stream to 1/3 City contribution; 1/3 earned income; 1/3 grants. Overall, there was support to try a bundle of revenue enhancing options that could lead to greater use of the building as long as the primary use as a conservatory was not compromised. More marketing is needed for both local and tourist attraction. Space rental, more events, more educational opportunities, and a café or place for coffee and a snack were raised as possible approaches.

In terms of using the Conservatory more intensively and differently, care should be taken to make sure that Parks balances the “exclusive” use with the public use. Minimizing disruption and ensuring that the facility is not damaged are important considerations. More parking was also mentioned as a consideration.

There were mixed responses to the idea of the Conservatory being run by a non-City entity or partnering with a non-profit to operate it. The Zoo and Aquarium models were mentioned as successes, but there were strong responses to keep it as a City entity. The overall sentiment was to make sure that the public mission is maintained.

Following are the Small Group responses from the reporting out section of the public meeting. Also, some folks submitted written responses to the five questions, and those follow the Small Group Responses.

NEXT STEPS

The results of the public input were provided to Rick Daley, the Consultant for the Business Plan, for inclusion in the Business Plan. He is preparing the draft plan that will be reviewed internally. In mid-April, the final plan will be completed. An Executive Summary of the final Volunteer Park Business Plan report will be posted on the Volunteer Park Conservatory website in late April: <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/parkspaces/VolunteerPark/conservatory.htm> .

The Business Plan will then be used by Parks, the budget office, the Mayor, and the City Council during the development of the City's 2013-2014 budget. In late September, the Mayor will submit to the City Council his recommended budget for 2013-2014. This budget includes both the operating and capital budgets for the City. The City Council holds budget hearings throughout the fall. The public will be able to comment on the budget at these hearings. The City Council votes on the budget during the third week of November, 2012.